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# LARRY CRAIG

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NEWS RELEASE

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## **REAUTHORIZATION OF CRAIG-WYDEN PROGRAM INTRODUCED**

**Long-term legislation offered as amendment to Supplemental Appropriations**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Idaho Senator Larry Craig and 11 other Senators introduced legislation today to reauthorize the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act, commonly referred to as Craig-Wyden.

In order to help timber-dependent communities offset the impact of federal lands on their tax base, the law established a safety net for the historic 25 Percent Fund payments that date back 100 years. Enacted in 2000, the Act also established Resource Advisory Committees, made up of a collaborative, local group to direct some of the funds to projects on the local forest and provided additional funding to “Title III” projects, including search and rescue reimbursement and implementation of the Firewise Community Protection Program.

Craig, Ranking Member of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee, said, **“Times have changed in seven years, and we need to adapt to reauthorize this program. I am pleased we were able to compromise and arrive with language we can all support.”**

The law expired in 2006 and has yet to be reauthorized. The Senate’s Supplemental Appropriations bill includes a one-year authorization of the entire law, not just the safety-net payments, with funding of \$425 million. The House’s version provides \$400 million and only reauthorizes the safety-net payments.

Today’s amendment is the first legislative reauthorization sponsored by both of the namesakes of the original law. It represents months of work and a great deal of compromise.

Craig spoke to the merits of the program beyond the safety-net payments, **“Craig-Wyden was vilified by the national environmental community in 2000 but has been a remarkable success. Not only has it assisted communities to deal with the dramatic decline in payments, but it has brought diverse, often feuding, interests to the same table to collaborate on projects. To me, that is the bigger story lost in this debate.**

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**“This reauthorization preserves the original intent of the law – a safety-net and a mechanism for local communities to work together to shape their future as it relates to the federal forests in their backyards.”**

The language does the following:

- Fully funds both Secure Rural Schools and the Payment-In-Lieu-of-Taxes (PILT) program from 2008-2012 for a total of \$4.7 billion (\$2.9 and \$1.8 respectively).
- Creates a new formula for the Secure Rural Schools that is based on the historical formula, the number of eligible public lands acres in a county, and the per capita personal income of all eligible counties. The payments will be phased down 10%/year, fulfilling the principles of the National Forest County Schools Coalition that the safety-net payments would be a temporary program.
- The Resource Advisory Committees (RACs) are reauthorized.
- California, Oregon, and Washington counties will be provided a transition payment from 2007 to 2010 to adjust to the new nationwide funding formula.
- All funding beyond FY2007 will be fully paid for by a combination of tax offsets.
- Counties have the flexibility to determine the amount of funding going to the three Titles, not to exceed 100%: Title I – 80-85%; Title II 13-20%; Title III 0-7%.
- The membership of the RACs is broadened to address limited availability of positions.
- Title III narrows the categories within which Counties may expend funds from six to three categories and requires reporting to the Secretary. Funds are available for search and rescue reimbursement, to carry out activities under the Firewise Community program, and to develop Community Wildfire Protection Plans as defined by the Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003.

Other cosponsors of the amendment are: Wyden, Bingaman, Smith, Reid, Baucus, Feinstein, Domenici, Crapo, Stevens, Bennett, and Murkowski.